

One of the graduate capabilities that many universities in the world seek to foster among students is leadership. Student leadership has long been a key word in the discourse of undergraduate curriculum reforms and research literature on student learning outcomes in higher education (Posner, 2009; Seider, 2010). There is, however, a lack of a clear conceptual understanding of student leadership and its place in the undergraduate curriculum. Apart from being an item in the list of graduate capabilities, reformers and researchers have invoked limited discussions of what constitutes student leadership and how it is interlinked to other graduate capabilities such as collaboration, reflection, critical thinking, and problem solving. Although an array of programmes and initiatives such as service learning, volunteering, and global citizenship are being implemented to nurture leadership, the conditions under which students exercise effective leadership remain under-examined. The positioning of student leadership development almost exclusively in the co-curriculum calls for a further question as to whether this capability is marginalised in the undergraduate curriculum (in which the formal academic curriculum traditionally occupies the centre stage).

For this qualitative study, interviews were conducted with undergraduate students involved in multicultural service learning (MSL) programs. Phenomenographic analysis (Marton, 1994) examined key aspects of the qualitative variations in students' conceptions of self and approaches to service. Three categories of description of students' MSL experiences were identified, ranging from the less coherent to the progressively more coherent categories. The qualitative variations in students' MSL experiences revealed a close interrelation between student leadership and other capabilities, such as taking moral actions, engaging with culturally different others, and learning through reflection and self-regulation. Although these capabilities are clearly distinguishable, they function as a holistic, complex development outcome – student whole person development.

This presentation outlines and discusses the qualitative study findings of significance for the field of service-learning and student leadership development. Researchers conclude that further research effort is required to investigate the nature and conditions for nurturing student leadership through formal and co-curricular learning experiences. The advancement of the field will benefit from a rethinking of student leadership and its role in the undergraduate curriculum.

References

- Barnett, R. (2007). *A will to learn: Being a student in an age of uncertainty*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 181–217.
- Boud, D. (2007). Reframing assessment as if learning is important. In D. Boud & N. Falchikov (Eds.), *Rethinking assessment in higher education* (pp. 14-26). London, UK: Routledge.
- Lough, B. J. (2011). International volunteers' perceptions of intercultural competence. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(4), 452–464.
- Posner, B. Z. (2009). A longitudinal study examining changes in students' leadership behavior. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(5), 551–563.
- Marton, F. (1994). Phenomenography as a research approach. In T. Husén & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of education* (2nd ed., Vol. 8, 4424–4429). London, UK: Pergamon Press.

Seider, S. (2010). *Shelter: Where Harvard meets the homeless*. London, UK: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Yee, P. L. F. Y. (2001). Competing contexts for developing personal and social education in Hong Kong. *Comparative Education*, 37(1), 65–87.